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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Leadership Skills, In-Service Training, People-Focused Leadership, Democratic Leadership, School Managers, Professional Development	This quantitative study examined the impact of in-service training offered by Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED) on the people-focused and democratic leadership skills of educational managers in Punjab, Pakistan. Random sample of 359 educational managers from the Punjab province participated in study. Data were collected using adopted questionnaires based on indicators used during QAED's in-service training sessions, administered through Google form with a five-point Likert scale. The results revealed that majority of participants perceived the in-service training as effective in enhancing people-focused & democratic leadership skills. The study highlights the importance of well-designed, targeted, and collaborative training programs in developing essential leadership skills, fostering collaboration and networking, realizing ongoing support systems & regularly assessing the effectiveness of training initiatives. The findings contribute to the growing body of research emphasizing the significance of professional development for educational leaders & implications for policy and practice in the education sector, as well as for leadership development in other industries.
ARTICLE HISTORY Date of Submission: 27-04-2024 Date of Acceptance: 30-05-2024 Date of Publication: 01-06-2024	 2024 Journal of Social Research Development
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Email:	mas1798@gmail.com
DOI	https://doi.org/10.53664/JSRD/05-02-2024-08-96-107

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of teacher training institutions in Pakistan was a primary focus for government following country's independence in 1947. The shortage of such institutions was significant concern, and government sought to address this issue through various educational policies. A crucial moment in this endeavor was the message delivered by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah during the Education Conference of 1947. This message served as a guiding principle, emphasizing importance

of professionally trained teachers and recognizing teaching as well-compensated profession (Jamal, Khan & Shah, 2023). The conference set the stage for development of a robust teacher education system in Pakistan, aiming to professionalize teaching and ensure adequate reward for educators. Educational leadership plays a vital role in global school reform and development efforts (Kang & Shaw, 2016). In context of Punjab, Pakistan, the education sector faces numerous systemic challenges that hinder student learning & outcome (Mansoor, 2015). Secondary school administrators, including heads, leaders & managers, drive change by fostering positive learning environments, implementing the innovative pedagogies, and streamlining school administration for the organizational efficiency (Bowers, 2017).

However, the professional training and development of educational leaders are often overlooked, depriving school managers of opportunities to develop essential leadership dimensions to tackle the complex education challenges (Owusu, 2018). Promotion-linked training refers to the professional development programs designed for the teachers, educational leaders, and managers who are being considered for advancement or have already been promoted to higher positions, promotion-linked training aims to equip participants with the necessary competencies and knowledge to be effective in their new roles (Abbas, Tariq & Jamil, 2021). The employment organizations use tailored training interventions including on-the-job training, workshops, mentoring, coaching & other modes. These learning opportunities are vital in frequently professionally developing educational leaders as they give them skills and expertise required to succeed in their new positions. These programs enhance leadership acumen, communication skills and problem-solving abilities. Besides, promotion-linked training enhances understanding as practitioners should have overall education system landscape and keeps practitioners informed about the emerging trends in the field (Abbas, Tariq, Hussain & Sheikh, 2023).

Pakistan's educational system faces a variety of challenges stemming from illiteracy and economic and political factors. Pakistan's education system has come to decline according to different surveys. Not even a single Pakistani university made it to the top 100 universities of the world. This shows the deteriorating condition of education in Pakistan. The education is demolished and shattered by our corrupt and feudal lord. Also, education system of Pakistan is based on unequal lines. The medium of education is different in both, the public and private sectors. This creates a sort of disparity among people, dividing them into two segments. One division is based on English medium language while other is based on Urdu medium language. These regional languages complex problem of education. Moreover, the crisis of female education is at its peak. The educational system fails to meet the needs of today's challenging world. What should be taught and what should not be? The education should be based on learning outcomes by suggesting multiple books rather than following a single book as an obligation. In the Government schools, they're not focusing on it. Also, the colonial rule has much effect on our educational system. The policies formulated in the past are still affecting the education system of Pakistan.

The educational leadership crisis in Pakistan bears supreme relevance for developmental standards that are achieved through informed populations, capable of charting the nation towards social and economic progress. The real challenge is to create a principle of transformative leadership that can

step up the inclusive, accessible, and quality education (Abbas, Tariq, Hussain & Sheikh, 2023). To address the leadership gap in the education, educational managers should implement deliberate adjustments. The comprehensive training programs for contemporary and dynamic leaders could be designed to enhance their capacity to lead complex problems. The collaborative initiatives between educational institutions and the industry could help to prepare them to meet increasing workforce demands. The establishment of a vibrant and consistent performance-oriented culture that attracts and retains qualified experts could regain the eligible workforce (Abbas, Rehman & Arif, 2023). The result-oriented distribution of resources linked with effective communication channels could improve decision-making capacity. The dialogues that foster collaborative and organic societies in continuous dialogue with educational institutions to evaluate and validate educational strategies could enhance the relevance of educational strategies. In Pakistani context, educational managers face various dimensional problems, persistently searching for the fundamental root causes, evident in education sector.

Leadership crises predominantly prevail in the education sector and other institutions in country. A variety of irrelevant policies, scarce resource distribution, and a lack of emphasis on teacher training have contributed to the perpetuation of widespread problems (Abbas, Sarwar & Rehman, 2024). Bureaucratic obstacles & political interference further exacerbate challenges faced by educational leaders. The failure to prioritize educational transformation and alignment with evolving the global standards hinders progress. Socio-economic disparities and cultural factors impede access to quality education. Thus, the issue can only be effectively addressed by adopting a comprehensive approach, which should consist of the policy reforms, efficient resource allocation, and creating a nationwide conducive learning environment (Abbas, Tariq & Arif, 2023). The issue can only be addressed if there are policy changes, effective allocation of resources, and a nationwide commitment to creating a learning atmosphere must be implemented (Bowers, 2017). The major root causes of the crisis of educational leadership in the case of educational managers in Pakistan are multi-dimensional. First is the resource constraints as insufficient funding and resource allocation leading to a lack of the essential infrastructure, resources, and adequately trained staff which act as a barrier to effective educational leadership.

Second, are the policy inconsistencies with continuous changes in the educational policies and the lack of long-term vision which creates ambiguity for the educational leadership to implement the strategies on sustainable basis. Third is the quality of education that is compromised by inadequate teacher training and development and an examination system based on rote learning that affects efficacy of educational leaders (Abbas, Tariq & Arif, 2023). Fourth, socio-economic imbalances in terms of urban-rural disparities and disparities among strata of society result ed in uneven access to quality education for children. Fifth is political interference and the influence of political entities in education matters that leads to appointment of persons in influential positions have no qualification about field of education which means a lack of quality in educational leadership. Lastly, insecurity of some areas does not allow operations of school regularly and it has an impact on the educational managers to ensure education consistently and stably (Abbas, Sarwar, Farooqi, Kouser & Qureshi, 2022). After extensive, laborious activities and idea-sharing during training sessions, educational managers develop significant expertise. The training sessions enable educational managers to utilize

skills, potentials, and innovative ideological practicality in true letter and spirit within the school education department.

Following the training, educational managers can effectively utilize allocated budgets and human resources in appropriate ways to attain maximum benefit for sake of public interest. High-quality in-service training programs for working school heads and administrators support their leadership practices, resulting in widespread teaching-learning improvements and improved student success (Earley & Bubb, 2007; Kang & Augustine-Shaw, 2016). While, the provincial Teacher Education Authorities in Punjab periodically conduct workshops for professional development, these efforts have limited impact due to their one-time delivery structure, which fails to provide ongoing support attuned to ground realities (Owusu, 2018). In contrast, QAED, formerly known as the Directorate of Staff Development (DSD) in Punjab, has organized advanced in-service training for the secondary school educational managers with transformative outcomes. Therefore, QAED is offering in-service training programs for the professional development of managers in line with the concept of life-long learning to cater to their developmental needs. The training programs discuss various areas/themes such as instruction leadership, pedagogical innovations, school-improved effective administration, technology integration, etc., as well as build the professional capacity of managers/leaders to lead change significantly.

The programs provide numerous mutual and win-win options to participate in career development opportunities as mentioned previously more often in conventional system (Owusu, 2018). Several research studies highlighted multi-faceted impact of QAED's focused in-service leadership pieces of training on student-centered instruction, student engagement, technology-driven teaching and learning, and improved school administration (Jamil, Sewani & Muhammad, 2024). While Punjab education department is implementing wide range of reforms at large to launch international ideals alignment, the success of QAED's initiatives validates their central role in preparing contemporary and ambitious secondary school managers/leaders. It has endeavored to explore existing in-service arrangements to skill up high-quality educational leaders equipped sufficiently to cope with the current era of school leadership challenges (Abbas, Shah & Tariq, 2023). The in-service training is essential for education managers to develop, refine their people-focused and democratic leadership skills. These training programs contribute to a positive school climate, improved staff retention, and better student outcomes. Moreover, analyzing areas needing improvement and formulating context-specific recommendations help develop impactful, efficient training programs for Punjab secondary school administrators.

Research Objectives

1. To determine the impact of in-service training on enhancing people-focused leadership skills among Punjab educational managers.
2. To determine impact of in-service training on enhancing democratic leadership skills among Punjab educational managers.

Research Questions

1. How does in-service training impact people-focused leadership skills among the educational managers in Punjab?

2. How does in-service training impact the democratic leadership skills among the educational managers in Punjab?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A growing body of empirical research has investigated the effectiveness of the in-service training initiatives in developing essential leadership and administrative capacities among school principals and educational managers, leading to widespread improvements (Kang & Shaw, 2016; Hussain et al., 2021). Still, in contexts like Pakistan, there remain critical gaps in evidence about sustained, job-embedded interventions tailored to leaders in deprived school systems (Bush, 2018). Robust, mixed-methods studies stress that well-designed in-service training programs significantly strengthen the managerial abilities of practicing school leaders across dimension like communication, planning, human resource management, data-driven decision-making and stakeholder engagement (Kang & Shaw, 2016). Leadership development initiatives grounded in adult learning theories that stress practical claim over coaching, reflection is considered highly impactful (Ferrigno & Muth, 2006). The managers learn to empathize with their staff and students, leading to stronger relationships and positive school climate. Aligning training content with local needs & offering sustained professional learning communities enables context-specific skill-building (Lynch, 2012). Trained school leaders donate to positive organizational conditions marked by the strong teacher collaboration and morale (Hussain et al., 2021).

For instance, the mentoring program helped principals provide meaningful feedback, foster shared leadership & develop positive relationships, factors tied to healthy school climate (Taylor Backor & Gordon, 2015). The instructional leadership training enhanced capacities for distributed leadership, teamwork, and collective responsibility in Kenya (Cheptonui, 2015). The Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED) in Punjab, Pakistan, plays a pivotal role in capacity building of school heads, particularly those in grades BS-17 to BS-18, through its promotion-linked training programs (Abbas et al., 2021). The training from QAED focuses on collaboration and networking, enabling educational managers at the BS-18 to BS-19 level to share their ideas, best practices, and challenges, thereby promoting a community of practice (Abbas et al., 2021). QAED Punjab training program fills gap in targeted training for educational administrators based on career development needs. The training helps managers learn how to motivate their teams through recognition, support, and opportunities for the professional growth. It was revealed that educational managers with STTP training developed capabilities in several areas, including management, leadership, administration, communication, organization, and planning with problem-solving (Abbas et al., 2023). Thus, recent studies have explored various dimensions of the teacher training and capacity-building programs offered by QAED.

A study investigated the impact of promotion-linked training on the performance and motivation of educational leaders in Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan, using mixed-method approach. The results showed that promotion-linked training pointedly impacted education leaders' job performance, enhancing their knowledge, skills, and improving institutional outcomes (Abbas et al., 2023; 2023a; Abbas, et al., 2022; Abbas, et al., 2023). Another study examined the outcome of in-service promotion-linked training of subject specialists from BS-17 to BS-18 concerning development of professional abilities

in pedagogy and financial management in Punjab (Abbas et al., 2023, 2023a). The recent studies in Pakistani context have focused on leadership practices of head teachers (Jamil et al., 2024), insights of head teachers about head teachers (Abbas, et al., 2022) challenges of instructional supervision faced by primary school head teachers (Arif et al., 2023), head teachers' training needs for quality education at secondary level (Hussain et al., 2021). The improved motivational skills lead to higher staff morale, job satisfaction, and overall productivity. Few recent studies are conducted (Abbas, et al., 2024, 2024a) regarding directive and visionary leadership skills and the impact of promotion-linked training on the professional development of educational leaders. These studies highlight the importance of promoting linked training in enhancing the professional capabilities of educators and educational leaders.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study was quantitative and employed the cross-sectional quantitative survey design to assess perspectives of 359 educational managers on in-service training programs and leadership practices in their schools. The target population comprises educational managers (principals, heads, senior teachers) registered with the Punjab School Education Department in the public secondary schools. A sample of 359 participants was selected through a simple random sampling technique. The data was collected through self-administered Google forms distributed to the 359 participants through an online survey. The survey data obtained through Google Forms was analyzed. Frequency distribution was calculated appropriately for the scaled variables and demographic factors using SPSS 20 software.

FINDINGS OF STUDY

Table 1 Effect of In-service Training on People-Focused Leadership Skills

Participants' responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	2	0.6
Disagree	9	2.6
Undecided	26	7.4
Agree	237	67.9
Strongly Agree	75	21.5
Total	349	100.0

The data shows that a significant majority of participants, 89.4% (67.9% agree and 21.5% strongly agree) believe that in-service training positively affects people-focused leadership skills. Only a small percentage of participants, 3.2% (0.6% strongly disagree and 2.6% disagree), do not believe that in-service training has had positive impact on their people-focused leadership skills. Moreover, 7.4% of participants remain undecided about effect of in-service training on their people-focused leadership skills.

Table 2 Effect of in-service training on democratic leadership skills of educational managers

Participants' responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	6	1.7
Disagree	16	4.6

Undecided	21	6.0
Agree	218	62.5
Strongly Agree	88	25.2
Total	349	100.0

The majority of participants, 62.5% (218 out of 349), agreed that in-service training had a positive impact on enhancing their democratic leadership skills. Moreover, 25.2% (88 out of 349) strongly agreed with this statement, indicating a substantial proportion of participants who acknowledged the effectiveness of training. On other hand, a relatively small percentage of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, accounting for 4.6% (16 out of 349) and 1.7% (6 out of 349), respectively.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study add to a body of knowledge that illuminates positive effect of in-service training on the people-focused leadership skills of educational managers. As shown by the results, a significant majority of the participants perceive in-service training as an effective to develop their abilities to lead, manage their teams through consideration for their needs, development, and well-being. These findings are in line with previous studies about leadership skills development among educational leaders (Kang & Shaw, 2016; Hussain et al., 2021). Both people-focused & democratic leadership skills might be affected by different factors. Well-designed training programs for adult learning have practical implications through reflective practices for development of competencies (Ferrigno & Muth, 2006). QAED Punjab is the leading example regarding training programs for educational managers effectively for BS-17 to BS-18 programs (Abbas et al., 2021). The collaboration and networking are focus of training program at QAED, which provides a platform for educational managers in terms of sharing their ideas, good practices, and challenging issues leads to community of practice (Abbas et al., 2021). Programs that align training content with local needs and provide professional learning communities for the context-specific skill-building are known to be effective (Lynch, 2012).

QAED Punjab's training program addresses this aspect through a well-defined training program for educational administrators based on the personnel career development plan. The study reveals that Educational Managers trained through the School Teacher Training program (STTP) have developed several skills like management skills, leadership skills, administration skills, communication skills, organization and planning, and problem-solving skills (Abbas et al., 2023). This way, the training is very relevant and closely associated with challenges and opportunities for educational managers in their specific context to improve performance. Research has proved that the impact of in-service training is beyond the individual leader as it creates positive building conditions in the organization with strong teacher collaboration and morale (Hussain et al., 2021). For example, mentoring program helped provide principals with effective feedback, initiatives for shared leadership, and supportive relationships, all are instrumental to the healthy school climate (Taylor & Gordon, 2015). Similarly, instructional leadership training improves distributed leadership, teamwork, collective errands in Kenyan schools (Cheptonui, 2015). Hence training not only helps in improvement of the individual

leadership skills but also impacts entire organization in developing a supportive and collaborative learning environment.

Some participants (3.2%) reported that they do not consider that the training has improved their people-focused leadership skills. This reminds me that providers of training programs continuously assess their training to meet the learning needs and learning preferences of educational managers with diverse needs. Regular feedback mechanisms and post-training evaluation disturbed to the trainees are some of the means to identify areas of potential improvement and design need-based programs. Somewhere about (7.4%) of the trainees could not say impact of the in-service training on their people-focused leadership skills. Such educational managers may most probably require the additional support and mentoring to derive maximum benefit from the program. It may be ideal for the providers of the training program to conduct more follow-up sessions with more practice sessions based on the first district-level session. A mentoring program after the training can be very useful and a peer support network for each other can make a lot of sense in implementing the hands-on learning of the program in real practices. Training institutions along with the policymakers should take into account the reported findings about the effectiveness of in-service training in developing people-focused leadership skills to further allocate the necessary resources to support this type of professional development to improve overall teacher effectiveness, learning outcomes and improve school performance.

The study findings have implications for policy and practice in the education sector. Based on the proven effectiveness of the in-service training on the development of people-focused & democratic leadership skills, educational institutions and policy makers should prioritize allocation of necessary resources and funding for professional development. Emotional Energy for learning how to develop people-focused leadership skills along with other core leadership competencies of the educational managers will provide far-sighted and positive effects in improving overall teacher effectiveness, student learning, and performance. The study also highlights importance of getting people-focused leadership skills developed through the in-service training along with other core competencies of educational leaders. Thus, this is the case for those institutions that seek to promote and grow the professional development of their managers for leadership potential at the different levels of their hierarchy. It implies that providers of the in-service training should collate all the useable collected training programs in the sense that similar types of leadership qualities training due to similar needs can also be curated with institutions having different training modules. Vendor-neutral programs are always best and this type of people-focused skill for in-service training to the non-educational institutions may also prove much fruitful in their quest for the improvement of the competence of the managers.

The study also highlights the potential of collaboration and sharing of ideas between and among the educational institutions and the institutions that provide the in-service training. The QAED Punjab has provided extracts of several leadership programs of promotion-linked training programs for the development of skills among educational leaders. There are several other educational institutions also leading in educational quality and effectiveness. If all such institution follows suit and form a forum where they may share their ideas for in-service training in general, conduct joint in-service

training that suits the needs of managers of all institutions, it will prove a much more efficient and innovative model of providing trained principals across country & speed up process of developments. Hence, findings of this study will increase knowledge base of educational leadership in schools in people-focused leadership, which means negotiating with people to set targets or any managerial decision in interest of people without any harm to people participating because of the decision. It also recommends such types of programs for another form of institution where better, participative, innovative managerial decisions are desired for high output by high commitment of the workforce of the organization.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to investigate the impact of in-service training on leadership skills of educational managers, with specific focus on people-focused leadership. The finding of this study has significant implications for the professional development of educational leaders and the improvement of the education system. First, the overwhelming results show that in-service training has influenced the people-oriented and democratic skills of managers. About 89.4% of the participants either agree or strongly agree that training programs have helped them to lead and manage their team members more effectively by valuing the needs and welfare of team members. On other hand, the majority of educational managers perceived the in-service training as effective in enhancing their democratic leadership skills. This positive perception highlights the potential value and significance of such training programs for the educational managers in developing their leadership capabilities aligned with democratic principles. Consequently, this result implies that the in-service training is critical toward individuals' leadership as it assists in developing skills and knowledge to create a conducive working environment.

The people-focused and democratic leadership are of paramount importance in educational setup. These help to create a favorable school climate, teacher collaboration, and professional growth of staff. It is by offering in-service training on such skills educational institutions will develop a culture of trust, empathy, and open communication for the achievement of organizational goals and student achievement. Still, it is important to note that, there is a small number of participants who did not perceive training as necessary for people-oriented and democratic leadership skills of educational leaders. The result from study shows that very few participants have perceived the training program as useful in enhancing people-oriented leadership skills of educational leaders. This implies that there is room to improve design and delivery of in-service training. Educational institutions should, therefore, assess effectiveness of training programs regularly by seeking responses from participants, and contents of training must be relevant, realistic, based on condition and nature of educational managers and leaders.

Recommendations

1. Institutes of education need to give priority to resource allocation and funding for in-service teacher training and development courses, to improve the people-centered and democratic leadership competencies in the educational managers.

2. In-service courses should be designed and offered based on the context, major challenges or educational issues, priority areas of educational mistakes about developing vital leadership competency in school managers working at the respective places.
3. During the preparation of the in-service training programs, the man-focused leadership shall incorporate a strategy to promote collaboration and networking.
4. The periodic training/ refresher training courses do not give sufficient support to correlate the participants with the post-training real work situation.

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